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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused December 24 news coverage on the arrival in Taiwan of two giant pandas from China Tuesday; on Taiwan's sagging economy; and on the continuous probe into the former First Family of Taiwan's alleged money laundering cases. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed piece in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by a senior research fellow at the Atlantic Council of the United States, discussed U.S. President-elect Barack Obama's incoming administration and how it should interact with China in the future. The article suggested that the new administration "indicate to its allies that they should expect more, not less, from U.S. engagement with China." A separate "Taipei Times" op-ed piece, on the other hand, discussed Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou's cross-Straits policy and said Ma's policies "could upset the status quo" in the Taiwan Strait. End summary.

A) "Obama's Pragmatic View of China"

Yu Tsung-chi, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of the United States, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (12/24):

"... Obama is a pragmatist at heart - he sees China not only as an opportunity but also as a challenge. The nomination of his national security team - with Senator Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, retired Marine General James Jones as national security adviser and Robert Gates staying on as secretary of defense - signaled that his China policy would be pragmatic rather than idealistic. All three of Obama's picks indicate a sweeping shift of priorities and resources in the areas of national security and foreign policy. They all know very well that China's cooperation is very important to the US' domestic and international interests. If one focuses on Asia, China is definitely the most crucial player the US must deal with. ... But for its China policy to succeed, the US must take several factors into account.

"First and foremost, the US must tend to its economic crisis and keep its economy competitive and vibrant. ... The next US administration will need economic power to bolster the country's military strength, diplomatic leverage and role as a global leader. If the US wasn't weighed down by an economic crisis as well as two wars, Washington would definitely hold more sway over Beijing on promoting a cooperative and constructive bilateral relationship. In addition, Washington must remind Beijing that the US wants a cooperative relationship and is optimistic about a durable mutual relationship. But the dialogue on democracy, human rights, Tibet and military build up must be particularly careful. ...

"Moreover, Obama has said the US must strengthen its capacity to defeat enemies and support friends, and that Washington should renew old alliances and forge new, enduring partnerships.

"The coming administration should therefore avoid giving China the impression that Washington is only interested in its relations with China - even at the expense of making other Asian allies irrelevant. On the contrary, the new administration should indicate to its

allies that they should expect more, not less, from US engagement with China. The fact is that most of Asia consists of democracies such as Australia, India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Washington should indicate to China that reinforcing the multilateral relationships of its allies is not intended to contain China but to teach it the rules in Asia: freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. China is welcome to join the democratic community, but it is not welcome to take charge of it."

B) "Ma Policies Could Upset 'Status Quo' in the Strait"

Taiwan New Century Foundation President Chen Lung-chu opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (12/24):

"... Since President Ma Ying-jeou took office in May this year, he has broken his election promises and gone against Taiwanese public opinion by moving rapidly in the direction of unification with his policy of leaning heavily toward China. ... His policies lead toward de-Taiwanization and away from Taiwan's sovereignty. Stressing the idea that cross-strait relations are more important than diplomatic relations, Ma has called a diplomatic truce with China and seeks to create an illusory atmosphere of peace between the two countries on either side of the Strait. This may give the international community the false impression that Taiwan is willing to become a part of the PRC. The Ma government has adopted these pro-China policies with scant regard to the opinions and rights of the public, aiming to sign a peace accord with China that disregards the concerns of other interested parties. These unilateral actions by Ma threaten to upset the long-standing 'status quo' in cross-strait affairs. What attitude Washington takes in response to these developments in Taiwan is a matter deserving of everyone's attention."

YOUNG